

AL, BNP wrangling over EC roadmap

STAR REPORT

The ruling Awami League has said it would not accept any act of the Election Commission if that goes beyond the constitution.

The BNP, however, alleged the government and the commission were speaking in the same voice.

The EC on July 16 announced a roadmap for the 11th national elections. The ruling party welcomed the move terming it implementable, but BNP alleged the roadmap was a 'blueprint' to bring AL back to power again.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader at a programme at Narayanganj yesterday said BNP would continue to raise various allegations against the EC unless the party assumed the office.

He added the AL would criticise the commission only when it would go beyond the constitutional provisions.

Talking to journalists while inspecting the operation of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's mobile court in Signboard area of Narayanganj, Quader also the minister for road transport and bridges said the AL wants to win the polls with people's mandate.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

The Election Commission cannot take the Awami League to power. It has no authority to bring any political party to power. So, there is no basis of BNP's allegations," he observed.

He alleged BNP was trying to make the EC controversial in a bid to thwart the election process by raising various allegations.

On the other side, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said there must be an election-time government during the polls.

Speaking at a party programme in Khulna yesterday, the BNP leader said the election-time government would assist the EC to hold the polls in a completely fair manner.

"And all the political parties will be given to be given their rights and be allowed to carry out their political activities before the elections," he added.

He alleged the ruling party was conspiring to hold 'another' stage-managed election and said the AL 'never paid heed to good words'.

"Its only goal is to cling to state power by any means. That is why it is hatching conspiracy to hold a stage-managed election again," he added.

Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said at a session of the "International Conference on Development Options for Dhaka Towards 2035" yesterday in the capital's Sonargaon hotel.



Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue, speaks at a session of the "International Conference on Development Options for Dhaka Towards 2035" yesterday in the capital's Sonargaon hotel.

PHOTO: STAR

Undocumented

At the meeting, DG Immigration Mustafiz Ali confirmed that all the illegal Bangladeshi living in Malaysia will get the opportunity to be legalised under the 'rehiring programme' which will continue till December 31, 2017, according to a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

The Malaysian government has also asked all the undocumented Bangladeshi there to take the opportunity and legalise their status under the programme.

About the crackdown, the high commission press release said the drive is part of a usual and continuous action undertaken by countries against irregular workers to maintain the law and order of that country.

The immigration authority also assured to facilitate free movement of illegal Bangladeshi workers to visit the Immigration office to register themselves in Malaysia with a tourist, professional or business visa from Bangladesh.

He suggested the Bangladeshi to come to Malaysia under the right categories of visa which will reduce the possibility of harassment at the airport.

The High Commission said around 26 Bangladeshi are now in different detention camps facing three months to one-year jail terms.

According to Bangladesh High Commission officials, the workers who obtained the e-cards will be able to stay and work until Feb 15, 2018. This means that those without a valid passport or permission to work may stay and work in Malaysia until Feb 15.

But the high commission has urged all Bangladeshi to obtain legal status as soon as possible by collecting their passports and completing the 'rehiring programme'.

flush out illegal immigrants in Malaysia. Police detained some 1035 foreign nationals, including 515 Bangladeshis.

Equipped with a biometric security system, the E-kad registration was free and valid for one year and it is functioning as a temporary confirmation of employment to replace valid travel documents from the respective embassies.

According to the Bangladesh High Commission, so far one lakh Bangladeshi came under the E-kad process and another 2.93 lakh under the 'rehiring programme', which of the DG of Immigration highly praised.

At the meeting, the DG of Malaysian Immigration informed the Bangladesh additional that there is no scope for any foreigner Malaysia with a tourist, professional or business visa from Bangladesh.

He suggested the Bangladeshi to come to Malaysia under the right categories of visa which will reduce the possibility of harassment at the airport.

The High Commission said around 26 Bangladeshi are now in different detention camps facing three months to one-year jail terms.

According to Bangladesh High Commission officials, the workers who obtained the e-cards will be able to stay and work until Feb 15, 2018. This means that those without a valid passport or permission to work may stay and work in Malaysia until Feb 15.

But the high commission has urged all Bangladeshi to obtain legal status as soon as possible by collecting their passports and completing the 'rehiring programme'.

managed the development potential of eastern Dhaka, like Pudong of east Shanghai, would be massive as it is mainly a rural area and walking distance from the city's most prosperous neighbourhoods.

Only a clear vision of the people, the government agencies, private investors, and development organisations, and timely actions could ensure a planned new city, he said.

"The World Bank is fully committed to this endeavour. We support the investments that are needed to transform Dhaka," he said.

The World Bank organised the conference -- Towards Great Dhaka: Development Options for Dhaka towards 2035 -- at the Dhaka Sonargaon Hotel with development practitioners, urbanisation experts, and high-ranking public office bearers from home and abroad.

Average driving speed on Dhaka city streets had dropped to less than 7kmph from 21kmph a decade ago, Fan said, adding that if the current trend continued, it would become 4kmph, which was slower than walking speed.

Traffic congestion eats up 3.2 million working hours every day and cost the economy several billions of dollars a year.

The World Bank country director in his presentation said Dhaka's population was expected to double to 35 million by 2035 and without proper planning and investment the city would never deliver its full potential.

Martin Rama, the World Bank chief economist for South Asia, citing Pudong and some other cities, in a presentation showed that proper planning could encourage economic vibrancy and improve liveability.

Developing east Dhaka in a sustainable manner was more meaningful than attempting to retrofit the over-built and over-congested Dhaka, said Rama.

Out of 16 union parishad areas added to Dhaka city, 12 were on the eastern fringe and could accommodate a new city, he said.

The HC bench of Justice AKM Abdul Hakin and Justice SM Moizur Rahman sent Arif to jail and ordered the officer-in-charge of Singair Police Station to take appropriate legal action against him.

Advocate Kibria said that when all this was brought to the court's notice the HC at different times summoned the OC of Singair Police Station and Arif's mother and heard their statements. It also ordered the jail authorities to produce Arif before the court.

Accordingly, Arif was produced before the HC and the court heard his statement.

Arif then moved a petition before the HC for scrapping his conviction and sentence in the rape case and the HC issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why the conviction and sentence should not be scrapped, he said.

The OC of Singair Police Station also appeared before the HC bench and submitted a probe report, saying Arif surrendered to the trial court and served in jail instead of Arif in exchange for money.

After hearing statements from Arif and the OC, the HC yesterday sent Arif to jail and asked the OC to file a case against him.

The court adjourned the hearing of an appeal filed by Arif seeking bail in the case till July 26, Kibria said.

Several top officials at the customs office said although Benapole had suffi-

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Anisul Huq said Dhaka city for years has been bogged down by perennial problems like traffic congestion and waterlogging.

"We're changing the city. Every three months you'll see a change in the city... In next two years we'll bring Dhaka up to a very good liveable standard..."

"Possibly, we'll not be able to solve all the problems. We're trying to change the transport system by formulating the policy of corporate ownership. If we can do that, a big problem in the transport sector would be solved," he said.



"Dhaka needs a constitution of its own or a common authority on city development and management."

Sheila Dikshit
FORMER DELHI CHIEF MINISTER



"A city government system is a must for resolving Dhaka's urban problems."

Sayed Khokon
DHAKA NORTH CITY CORPORATION MAYOR



"We're changing the city. Every three months you'll see a change in the city..."

Anisul Huq
DHAKA SOUTH CITY CORPORATION MAYOR



"The World Bank is fully committed to this endeavour. We support the investments that are needed to transform Dhaka."

Quimiao Fan
WORLD BANK COUNTRY DIRECTOR

of other countries in tune with its own local context and culture, he added.

In another recorded speech, Shao Yudong, former member Pudong district standing committee, said an ambitious plan needs to have the long-term vision taken into account.

"If we rush and try to do many things at the same time, it may spoil the plan. We divide and implement the plan part by part based on available resources and these parts come together to form the overall picture," he said.

Economic Relations Divisions Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Islam said apart from a comprehensive plan, some major infrastructural projects should be implemented to transform Dhaka. Partnership with others, apart from the World Bank, was also needed, he said.

Abul Kashem Khan, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said Dhaka has to be transformed. The city needs to be decentralised and expanded accordingly. Rail, road, and water links must be established with adjacent districts, he added.

Maj Gen Abu Sayed Md Masud of Special Works Organisation of the Army said Dhaka could be transformed. Hatiniror project was a role model for the transformation, he said.

Coordination among stakeholders, chalkling out a master plan, and restoring the four rivers surrounding the capital, among others, could transform Dhaka.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury said coordination among various agencies could always be ensured through the Prime Minister's Office.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, said the discourse would identify opportunities for the upcoming new Dhaka city.

Zhu Ruolin, former dean of Pudong Planning and Design Institute, China and Abdur Raham, chairman of Rajuk, also spoke on the occasion.

"Now the World Bank is talking about a planned Dhaka towards 2035 but I have not seen them advocating for a planned Dhaka city in the last 15 years," the mayor added.

LRD Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain said Dhaka contributes one percent of the country's landmass but contributes 36 percent to the GDP with 10 percent of the total population.

The government is working with a vision to make Dhaka the capital of a middle-income country by 2021 and capital of a developed country by 2041, he said.

Dhaka South City Corporation

Zhao Qizheng, former vice-mayor of Shanghai, in a recorded video speech said, "To develop Pudong we need a plan first. A physical plan that includes the location of the power plant, water plant, roads, number of new offices and modern factories."

Pudong's reform was announced in 1990. Many western media had then said Pudong's development plan would not work.

"Pudong's experience may be applicable in some parts of China, but it may not be suitable for Bangladesh," said Qizheng, adding that lessons could be learnt.

A country has to adopt experience

cient manpower.

"On several occasions, we talked to NBR in this regard but to no avail," said an official, wishing not to be named.

Some 500 trucks carrying import goods, worth around Tk 20 crore and 250 trucks with export goods, worth around Tk 10 crore, go through the port every day, said officials.

Currently, the customs office receives declarations from 00:00am to 5:00pm. However, loading and offloading of goods at the port may continue till midnight.

Mofizur Rahman, president of C&F Agent Association, loading and offloading of goods were often delayed due to a lack of manpower, which creates troubles for importers.

"The workload is huge. One official has to do the work of two to three agents," he said.

Shawkat Hossain, commissioner at the Benapole customs house, also said regular activities at the port were being hampered due to the crisis. He said extra manpower has to be hired for a round-the-clock operation there.

As many as 173 of the 341 posts at the customs office and 20 of the 120 posts at the port office in Benapole are vacant, reports our Benapole correspondent, citing officials concerned.

To ensure a clean break for Arif, his relatives offered Arif, a local of the area, Tk 2 lakh to change his fortune, Kibria said.

Arif soon returned to the country from Malaysia on June 5, 2015, and surrendered to the trial court the same

needed to stay active all the time.

FBCCI WELCOMES GOVT DECISION
Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has welcomed the government decision to keep the ports open 24/7.

However, with the current capacity, it may be difficult to deal with the increased number of import and export goods, he said.

He said the government has not yet decided what to do with the port after 24/7 operation.

He said the government needs more manpower and heavy equipment at the Chittagong port.

For example, he said, there were only four gantries, meant for carrying goods from offshore to onshore for transportation, at the port.

"We need at least 10 such gantries at this moment as our work has increased manifold over the years," he said.

Sometimes, it takes 10 to 12 days to offload goods from the port, which creates problems for everybody, including the foreign trade partners, he said.

When money can buy

China, where impostors or body doubles stand trial and receive punishment in someone else's place, usually for their own criminal record.

Following a petition, the HC on April 4, 2015, granted six months' bail to Arif and ordered the OC of Singair Police Station to investigate the matter.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Arif's lawyer Golam Kibria said Arif was released following the HC order.

On July 1, the immigration authorities launched a large-scale operation to

Ctg, Benapole ports to stay open 24/7

FROM PAGE 1
of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Bank, Bangladesh Land Port Authority and the port authority participated in the meeting chaired by Shipping Minister Kishore Kumar.

The meeting decided that the foreign ministry would write to its Indian counterpart so that Petrapole land port in West Bengal is also kept open round-the-clock. Petrapole is on the Indian side of Petrapole-Benapole border.

Apart from the customs office, the immigration department, banks and offices of Border Guard Bangladesh also would need to stay open 24 hours every day, the meeting discussed.

BENAPOLE LAND PORT

At present, the customs house at the Benapole port has only half of the manpower it requires for functioning smoothly and it is hampering the export and import activities there.

As many as 173 of the 341 posts at the customs office and 20 of the 120 posts at the port office in Benapole are vacant, reports our Benapole correspondent, citing officials concerned.

Several top officials at the customs office said although Benapole had suffi-

cient manpower.

"On several occasions, we talked to NBR in this regard but to no avail," said an official, wishing not to be named.

Some 500 trucks carrying import goods, worth around Tk 20 crore and 250 trucks with export goods, worth around Tk 10 crore, go through the port every day, said officials.

Currently, the customs office receives declarations from 00:00am to 5:00pm. However, loading and offloading of goods at the port may continue till midnight.

Zafar Islam, deputy director at the port, said they would need twice or even thrice the number of their current staff in this regard.

Rezaul Islam, deputy director at the port, said they would need twice or even thrice the number of their current staff in this regard.

CHITTAGONG SEA PORT
The Chittagong port has been witnessing a congestion of vessels at its outer anchorage for the last two months.

Talking to The Daily Star, port officials said the main reason behind the situation is lack of jetty and equipment needed for dealing with increasing number of bulk cargoes and containers.

There is no alternative to constructing new jetties and ports, they said.

Zafar Islam, member (member and planning) at the Chittagong Port Authority, said the port always remained open except three days during the two Eids.

"The other stakeholders, including importers and exporters, have to be active 24 hours. We are always ready to deliver goods whenever the clearing and forward agents come," he said.

Previously, value assessment of export cargoes was carried out seven days a week at the Chittagong customs house. Since July 6, the same has been done with the import cargoes, said officials, adding that on average, two lakh metric tonnes of goods are imported and exported through this sea port every day.

AFM Abdulla Khan, commissioner at the customs house, said the cleaning and forwarding agents